Congressional Outlook

**Week of January 13th**

Congress will focus this week on finalizing the fiscal year (FY) 2014 spending bills before the continuing resolution (CR) that is currently funding government operations expires at midnight on Wednesday night. House and Senate appropriators are expected to unveil the $1.9 trillion omnibus appropriations measure later today. The bill could hit the House floor as early as tomorrow. However, first, the House will consider a three-day extension of the existing CR to buy a little more time to get the bill through the Senate and to the President's desk.

The Senate is scheduled to vote today to move forward on amended legislation that would extend emergency unemployment benefits, S. 1845. Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) proposed an amendment that would revive the expanded benefits through mid-November and pay for it with a one-year extension of a portion of sequestration. It also would eliminate some “double dipping” by people eligible for both unemployment and disability benefits. The underlying bill is a three-month extension with no offsets.

Week in Review

**IRS Responds to Volunteer First Responders’ Request for Clarification on Affordable Care Act Requirements**

Volunteer fire companies across the country got some clarification on Friday with a letter from the IRS indicating that bona fide volunteer first responders will not be counted as employees for purposes of the ACA’s employer mandate. Final regulations from the IRS are forthcoming.

**Health Data Security Bill Passes House**
On Friday, the [House passed the Health Exchange Data Security and Transparency Act](http://example.com) with a bipartisan vote of 291-122. Sixty-seven Democrats joined a united Republican Caucus to adopt the bill, which would require the Department of Health and Human Services to notify people when their personal information was disclosed outside of the government's health care exchange system. For more, [click here](http://example.com).

**Progress Made on Flood Insurance Delay Despite Cloture Vote Holdup**

On Thursday, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) said he will support [the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act](http://example.com) ([S. 1846](http://example.com)), adding another important conservative vote to the initiative. Despite personal concerns that the delay could have negative effects on the sustainability of the NFIP, Senator Rubio stated he supports the bill because of the painful effects rate hikes have had on Florida residents and the Florida economy. This news comes at an important time in the Senate, as the chamber prepares for a possible cloture vote on S. 1846 sometime this week. For more, [click here](http://example.com).

**House Ways and Means Not Mulling Extenders Bill; Comprehensive Tax Reform Draft Expected Soon**

House Ways and Means Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Pat Tiberi told reporters Wednesday that the Committee has not swayed from its original promise to deliver a comprehensive tax reform bill. As opposed to the Senate Finance Committee's approach of releasing a procession of smaller draft bills, the House side believes a one-bill approach will be more effective at influencing more aspect of tax reform. The House Committee said it should release its single-product tax reform bill soon, although, no specific date has been cited.

### Congressional Hearing Schedule

**Monday, January 13**

- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Energy and Power Subcommittee markup of H.R.3826, the "Electricity Security and Affordability Act," to provide direction to the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency regarding the establishment of standards for emissions of any greenhouse gas from fossil fuel-fired electric utility generating units. (Also scheduled for Tuesday, January 14.)

**Tuesday, January 14**

- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing on "Building the Foundation for Surface Transportation Reauthorization."
- House Financial Services Committee's Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit Subcommittee hearing on "How Prospective and Current Homeowners Will Be Harmed by the CFPB's (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau) Qualified Mortgage Rule."
- House Natural Resources Committee hearing on "Oversight of the Obama
Administration's Questionable Application of Sequestration to the Secure Rural Schools Program and the Costs to States, Local Economies, and Rural School Children.

- House Homeland Security Committee's Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications Subcommittee hearing on "Hurricane Sandy: Lessons Learned and the Path Forward."
- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing on "Examining Conference and Travel Spending Across the Federal Government."

**Wednesday, January 15**

- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee hearing on "A Review of the Challenges Facing California High Speed Rail."
- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Communications and Technology Subcommittee hearing on "#CommActUpdate: Perspectives from Former FCC Chairmen," focusing on modernizing the laws governing the communications and technology sector.
- House Small Business Committee hearing on "The Power of Connection: Peer-to-Peer Businesses."
- Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee hearing on "The Future of Unmanned Aviation in the U.S. Economy: Safety and Privacy Considerations."

**Thursday, January 16**

- House Science, Space, and Technology Committee hearing on "Healthcare.gov: Consequences of Stolen Identity."
- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing on "2014: Seeking PPACA (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act) Answers."
- Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing on "Strengthening Federal Access Programs to Meet 21st Century Needs: A Look at TRIO and GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs)."
- Senate Judiciary Committee markup of S.619, the "Justice Safety Valve Act of 2013"; S.1410, the "Smarter Sentencing Act of 2013"; and S.1675, the "Recidivism Reduction and Public Safety Act of 2013."
- Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee hearing on "Progress Report on Public Transportation under MAP-21."
- Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee's Communications, Technology, and the Internet Subcommittee hearing on "Locating 911 Callers in a Wireless World."